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## COUNCIL

### Hundred and Fifty-fourth Session

Rome, 30 May - 3 June 2016

### Coverage of FAO decentralized offices

#### Guidance sought

The Secretariat proposes that the Council endorse the recommendations of the Regional Conferences on decentralization and request the Director-General to take all initiatives to complete the establishment of a harmonious and effective decentralized offices network.

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### *Background*

1. The Hundred and Fifty-third session of the FAO Council held in November–December 2015 was informed of the need for FAO to review its decentralized offices network to improve the Organization's operational effectiveness in light of the evolving national and regional policy environment.
2. Decisions relating to opening or closing of offices, however, and some changes in the nature of an office (for example, changing a country office into a subregional one), require the approval of FAO's governing bodies.
3. The Council welcomed the review paper, requested that the document be transmitted for review by the 2016 Regional Conferences, and agreed to re-examine the coverage of FAO's decentralized offices at its next session in June 2016.<sup>1</sup>

### **Views and Recommendations of the Regional Conferences**

4. As requested, each of the five Regional Conferences took up this issue, each in somewhat different ways. The Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Conference, for example, limited its recommendations to a more general level, while the Africa Regional Conference views and recommendations go into considerable detail. All, however, welcomed the review, recognized its importance and broadly supported the proposed principles and general criteria for reviewing the coverage of FAO offices. They all recognized the need to update the office coverage and the decentralized office network in order to adapt to current developments and requirements and achieve greater efficiency in the implementation of strategic objectives. Furthermore, the Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean suggested as valid options, for consideration by Member Nations, multiple accreditation offices with an FAO representative located in another country, or partnership and liaison offices.
5. Only the Regional Conference for Africa questioned one of the criteria proposed by the Independent Review of Decentralized Offices Network, the criterion of transport linkages. The Africa Regional Conference indicated that this criterion cannot be used to guide the review process in the Africa region but rather explore other criteria such as population and others that FAO uses in making decisions guided by the fact that FAO's interventions are at the national, regional and international levels.

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<sup>1</sup> The views and recommendations of the regional Conferences are available in their reports at the following links: [Latin America and the Caribbean](#), [Asia and the Pacific](#), [Africa](#), Near East and Europe.

### Decisions for the Council

1. The decisions requiring endorsement of the Council include the following:
  - a) Create a separate Subregional Office for West Africa, based in a Francophone country, in Côte d'Ivoire or Senegal, location to be determined by the Director-General, in consultation with the countries concerned.
  - b) Establish a Subregional Office for Mashreq countries in Lebanon, appreciating the offer and readiness of Lebanon (logistically, administratively and financially) to host this office.
2. Additionally, the Council might wish to reiterate the following principles, already stated by previous Council's resolutions or by some Regional Conferences:
  - a) Broadly support the proposed principles and general criteria of the Independent Review of the Decentralized Offices Network for refining the coverage of FAO's offices, while noting the view expressed by the Africa Regional Conference on the criterion on transportation.
  - b) As a general principle, the creation of new offices or the support for upgrades that have been expressed in Regional Conferences would have to be implemented on a cost neutral basis, within funds to be identified from elsewhere, ideally on a cost-sharing agreement with the host government<sup>2</sup> concerned.
  - c) Partnership and liaison offices and multiple accreditation offices with an FAO representative located in another country are very valid options to optimize the cooperation with FAO.
  - d) Reaffirm the need to readjust the coverage of the decentralized offices in a flexible manner and with no increase in overall cost of the decentralized network budget.

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<sup>2</sup> CL 144/15 (11-15 June 2012) para 23: "Increased use of cost-sharing agreements with host governments is being actively explored, particularly in large and middle-income countries. This should open up the opportunity to reallocate resources to vulnerable countries in the same region."